

**Child Welfare Improvement Committee
Indiana Court Improvement Program**

Minutes

January 8, 2016

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

1. Members present. Magistrate Heather Mollo (chair), Kimberly Howe Ferguson, Magistrate Andy Roesener, Cathy Graham, Leslie Dunn, Lisa Rich (telephonic).
2. Staff present. Matthew Hagenbush and Angela Reid-Brown.
3. Welcome and Introductions. New members Kimberly Howe Ferguson and Magistrate Andy Roesener were welcomed to the Committee. Committee members introduced themselves.
4. Approval of Minutes from October 2, 2015 meeting. The minutes from the October 2, 2015 meeting were approved.
5. CIP Timeliness Measures. Matthew Hagenbush reviewed the fiscal year 2015 (October 1, 2014-September 30, 2015) CIP Timeliness Measures Report. Matthew reported the numbers look reasonably good, but there is room for improvement. There is a concern that the time to subsequent permanency hearing number may be too low. There was discussion that some jurisdiction may treat every hearing after the initial permanency hearing as a permanency hearing without complying with the statutory requirements for permanency hearings. Committee members also noted that parental substance abuse cases may take longer to get to Termination of Parental Rights.
6. Legal Orphans Project. Angela Reid-Brown gave a brief history of the project. Matthew reported data obtained from the Odyssey case management system showed there are 632 children with termination orders entered in Odyssey and 327 children who have had parental rights terminated for more than one year. Lisa Rich provided an overview of DCS data. She reported the state is struggling to achieve permanency for children who have been in care for more than 2 years. She said this might be the population that the legal orphans project focus on first. Magistrate Mollo wondered if the project should focus on a particular group or if it should look at legal orphans more globally.

Lisa reported all DCS regions are working on their Biennial Regional Services Strategic Plan. Each region will be looking at kids that have been in care for longer than 24 months, and this may be an area that the Committee can collaborate with DCS on. Leslie Dunn suggested the Committee should focus its attention first on older youth because they are

the ones who are at greatest risk of aging out of care. Data shows older youth who age out of foster care are at greater risk of becoming pregnant and homeless. She reported the GAL/CASA program is considering applying for a grant for the fostering futures program. This program trains CASA volunteers to work with youth age 14-18 to mentor them and help them become successful adults.

Other suggestions for the legal orphans project included identifying and promoting best practices for permanency hearings for older youth, encouraging more frequent and focused court hearings for legal orphan cases, creating a sense of urgency for all cases in which TPR has been granted, requiring DCS offer concrete details about its permanency plan for a child at TPR hearings, and enhancing Permanency Roundtables for legal orphan cases.

Next Steps:

Angela and Matthew will research permanency questions judicial officers can ask. Angela, Matthew, and Magistrate Mollo will examine how other states are addressing legal orphan cases. Kimberly will work on permanency related questions to ask of youth, Cathy will talk to researchers, and Leslie will provide information at the next meeting about the Fostering Futures program.

Future meeting dates

- March 4, 2016
- May 6, 2016
- July 1, 2016
- September 2, 2016
- November 4, 2016